

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY JIDDA
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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, LE, IS

SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON: CALL BY LEBANESE AMBASSADOR
AUGUST 2 ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY SAUNDERS

1. LEBANESE AMBASSADOR NAJATI QABBANI CALLED AT HIS
REQUEST ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY SAUNDERS TO DISCUSS SOUTH
LEBANON SITUATION. QABBANI SAID THAT
THE DECISION TO SEND THE LEBANESE

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ARMY SOUTH HAD BEEN VERY CAREFULLY CONSIDERED. THE
LEBANESE GOVERNMENT HAD DISCUSSED IT THOROUGHLY WITH THE US,
WITH SECRETARY GENERAL WALDHEIM AND WITH OTHER FRIENDLY
STATES. IN EFFECT THE LEBANESE DECISION WAS PART OF THE
PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING RESOLUTION 425. IF ISRAEL
SUCCEEDED IN PREVENTING THE ARMY FROM MOVING SOUTH THE
RESULT WOULD BE NOT ONLY A MAJOR SETBACK FOR HOPES OF

RESTORING STABILITY TO LEBANON BUT A FAILURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. THIS WOULD, QABBANI THOUGHT, HAVE REPERCUSSIONS BEYOND LEBANON ITSELF.

2. IN REPLY SAUNDERS SAID WE AGREED COMPLETELY WITH THIS POINT OF VIEW. IF THE ARMY'S PASSAGE WERE BLOCKED AND IT WERE FORCED TO RETURN TO BEIRUT, THE CONSEQUENCES WOULD BE VERY SERIOUS. WE WERE IN CONSTANT CONTACT BY PHONE AND CABLE WITH BEIRUT AND TEL AVIV. THE

SECRETARY HAD SENT A STRONG MESSAGE TO PRIME MINISTER BEGIN URGING ISRAELI COOPERATION, AND AMBASSADOR LEWIS HAD MADE OUR VIEWS CLEAR IN A SUBSEQUENT MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN IT WAS EVIDENT THAT THE ISRAELIS WERE TAKING OUR URGINGS SERIOUSLY BUT WE DID NOT KNOW WHAT THE RESULTS WOULD BE YET. SOME PARTIES IN ISRAEL APPARENTLY HELD A VIEW THAT SENDING THE ARMY SOUTH WAS A FIRST STEP IN TAKING OVER CONTROL OF THE BORDER AREAS FROM CHRISTIAN MILITIAS AND FELT THAT THIS WOULD ENDANGER ISRAELI SECURITY. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS VIEW WAS MISGUIDED AND SHORTSIGHTED BUT THIS EXPLAINED THE ISRAELI ATTITUDE.

3. AMBASSADOR QABBANI SAID THAT WHILE IT WAS THE ULTIMATE AIM OF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT TO BRING THE BORDER AREA UNDER CONTROL WITH ITS OWN FORCES, THIS WAS NOT SECRET

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THE IMMEDIATE AIM IN SENDING THE ARMY SOUTH. THE DECISION HAD BEEN TAKEN IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE SYMBOLICALLY THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS DETERMINED TO CONTROL ALL LEBANESE TERRITORY. SAUNDERS SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE FEELING A LITTLE DISILLUSIONED WITH US BECAUSE WE HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO BRING ABOUT THE PASSAGE OF THE LEBANESE ARMY INTO SOUTHERN LEBANON. IN FACT WE WERE MAKING INTENSIVE EFFORTS AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT. AMBASSADOR QABBANI SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT THE FUTURE OF LEBANON WOULD BE IF ISRAEL CONTINUE TO PUT OBSTACLES IN THE FACE OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT THROUGH ITS SUPPORT OF CHRISTIAN MILITIAS. HE BELIEVED THAT IF THE ISRAELIS WERE TO WITHDRAW THEIR SUPPORT, THE MILITIAS COULD QUICKLY BE BROUGHT INTO LINE. IT WAS A DECISIVE MOMENT FOR THE FUTURE OF LEBANON. SAUNDERS SAID WE UNDERSTOOD THIS FULLY. WE HOPE TO HAVE BETTER NEWS TO GIVE AMBASSADOR QABBANI IN COMING DAYS AND WE WOULD STAY IN TOUCH. VANCE

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